



THE STORY

OF

MARY'S LITTLE LAMB











Purchased At  
Longfellow's Wayside Inn  
South Sudbury, Mass.





The  
Story of  
*Mary*  
and her  
*Little*  
*Lamb*





The Story of  
*Mary and Her Little Lamb*

*as told by*

*Mary and her  
Neighbors and Friends*

To which is added a critical analysis of the Poem



*Now put into print for the Old School-  
house which Mary attended and  
which now stands near the Wayside  
Inn at Sudbury, Massachusetts, and  
which was made famous by Long-  
fellow's "Tales of a Wayside Inn."*



PUBLISHED BY  
**Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford**  
Dearborn, Michigan

1928



*(Facsimile of two pages in McGuffey's  
old Second Reader)*

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LESSON XLVII.

lamb	school	re-ply'	a-gainst'
harm	ea'ger	fol'low	chil'dren
fleece	Ma'ry	wait'ed	an'i-mal
laugh	a-fraid'	ap-pear'	lin'ger-ed
makes	gen'tle	teach'er	pa'tient-ly

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MARY'S LAMB.

1. MARY had a little lamb,  
Its fleece was white as snow,  
And every-where that Mary went,  
The lamb was sure to go.



2. He followed her to school one day;  
That was against the rule;  
It made the children laugh and play,  
To see a lamb at school.
3. And so the teacher turned him out;  
But still he lingered near,  
And waited patiently about,  
Till Mary did appear.
4. And then he ran to her, and laid  
His head upon her arm,  
As if he said, "I'm not afraid,  
You'll keep me from all harm."
5. "What makes the lamb love Mary so?"  
The eager children cry;  
"O, Mary loves the lamb, you know,"  
The teacher did reply.
6. "And you, each gentle animal  
To you, for life, may bind,  
And make it follow at your call,  
If you are always *kind*."

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EXERCISES.—What did Mary have? Where did the lamb go with Mary? What did the lamb do? Why did he love Mary? How can we make animals love us?



# *The Story of* *MARY'S LITTLE LAMB*

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**T**HIS is the story of Mary and her lamb, the school, and all the other persons and incidents noted in the famous verses.

There *was* a Mary, and there *was* a lamb. It is not an imaginary tale about an imaginary Mary and a mythical lamb that the poem celebrates, for Mary herself lived until 1889, and the old Redstone Schoolhouse of District No. 2, in Sterling, Massachusetts, is still to be seen in use. But the schoolhouse is not in Sterling now. When it became known as the scene of the immortal children's classic it was removed for preservation and now stands in the shadow of deep woods on a side road near Longfellow's Wayside Inn, at Sudbury, Massachusetts, where its old walls echo to songs and lessons again.

This primitive temple of education has had a varied history. Built about 1798, it continued in use as a school until 1856, when it was sold for thirty-five dollars and fifty cents. This cannot be considered a low price when it is remembered that the quarter-acre lot of land on which it stood was sold for ten dollars. It was a corner lot, too, on the road between Sterling and Clinton. Although known throughout the countryside as 'the old Redstone Schoolhouse,' it was really an ordinary wooden building of the familiar country-school type, sixteen by thirty feet, and painted red; its name was taken from the fact that it stood on a rising called Redstone Hill. There were little benches for the very young and rude writing desks which accommodated four of the older pupils, and the chimney had a niche to store inkwells in the winter nights to keep them from freezing.



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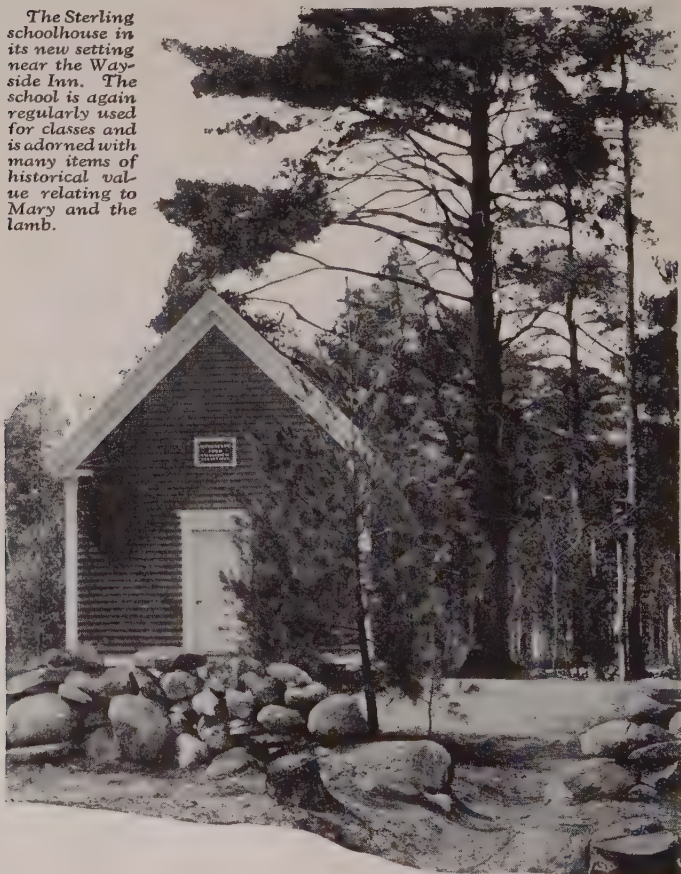
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When its educational career ended in 1856, the building saw various uses until eventually it became part of the Baptist church society's barn and garage at Sterling. Here, in 1926, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford discovered it, and then began the train of events which brought the 'Redstone' schoolhouse of Sterling to the Wayside Inn of Sudbury, and restored it to its old-time use. In the new schoolyard are two boulders bearing bronze memorial tablets. On one, is a facsimile of two pages out of *McGuffey's Reader* giving the 'Mary's Lamb' lesson, while the other bears the inscription given on the following page.

The Sterling schoolhouse in its new setting near the Wayside Inn. The school is again regularly used for classes and is adorned with many items of historical value relating to Mary and the lamb.





# IN HONOR OF THE CHILDREN'S CLASSIC "MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB"

AND OF

MARY ELIZABETH SAWYER-1806-1889-THE "MARY" OF THE POEM  
REBECCA KIMBALL, THE TEACHER  
JOHN ROULSTONE, AUTHOR OF THE FIRST TWELVE LINES  
SARAH JOSEPHA HALE, WHOSE GENIUS COMPLETED THE POEM IN  
ITS PRESENT FORM

THIS BUILDING INCORPORATES THE ORIGINAL "REDSTONE" SCHOOL HOUSE,  
SCENE OF THE POEM WHICH STOOD IN THE SECOND SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
STERLING MASSACHUSETTS. IT WAS IN USE FROM 1798 TO 1856 AND  
WAS REMOVED TO THIS SPOT FOR ITS PRESERVATION BY

MR. AND MRS. HENRY FORD  
JANUARY 1927

The principal personages of this story are Mary Sawyer, the heroine; John Roulstone, the original rhymster who wrote the first twelve lines; Polly Kimball, the teacher who turned the lamb out of school; and Sarah Josepha Hale, whose name is connected with the expansion of the poem and its popularization in print.

Here, then, is the story of Mary Sawyer. The Sawyers of New England came from Lincolnshire, England, in 1643, and 'were an unprecedentedly prolific race. They probably outnumber any other family race throughout New England, unless it be the Wilders; and no one family of them could equal that of Thomas Sawyer.' So read the chronicles of *The Sawyers in America*. They were well named—they were in fact *sawyers*. 'If the Sawyers were not born with saws in their hands, the saws came very readily to their



Mary at 35 years of age.

hands . . . Every town, village, road and lane throughout New England bears witness of their skill and industry.' They were millwrights, wheelwrights, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, carpenters, coopers, and they were pioneers in the use of water power. To this day their mills and lumber yards are to be found in the hands of their descendants, and they have made their mark in the academic, political and military worlds.

From this race was born, on March 22, 1806, Mary Elizabeth Sawyer. She was of the fourth generation in America and herself the beginning of the fifth generation in her family line. Her father was Thomas, the son of Ezra Sawyer, and her mother was Elizabeth Houghton.

The true story of the lamb as told by Mary herself is found in the fullest and best form in 'Mary Had a Little Lamb,' published in 1902 by Frederick A. Stokes Company. The story follows. To avoid confusion, the reader should bear in mind that 'Mrs. Tyler' was the marriage name of Mary Sawyer.

'Well, if I had known,' Mrs. Tyler smilingly said to a visitor at her home a few years ago, 'that the interest I took in my little pet was to have given me so much notoriety, I do not know that I should have carried out the plan I did; but I think I should, for then I was too young to understand much about notoriety, though not too young to take an interest in dumb animals, especially when I saw them suffering.'

At first Mrs. Tyler was somewhat loath to talk for publication; but when informed that it was the little

*'One lamb had been forsaken by its mother. I couldn't bear to see the poor little thing suffer. So I took it into the house.'*



folk for whom the story was to be told, she related the tale as follows:

'Of course it will not be necessary for me to tell you about the house where I was born in Sterling; if you have been there, you know all about it. I was always very fond of animals; and from the time I could toddle out to the barn I was with the dumb beasts not a little of my time. I think there was not a horse, cow, sheep, ox, or any other animal upon the place, but knew me. It was rare sport for me to pluck clover tops, and make the horses follow me about the fields for them. By calling to them or to the cows, I could get them to come to me, and I always intended to have something for them when they came.



*Mary in her old age at Somerville, Massachusetts.*

'One cold, bleak March morning I went out to the barn with father; and after the cows had been fed, we went to the sheep pen, and found two lambs which had been born in the night. One had been forsaken by its mother, and through neglect, cold and lack of food was nearly dead. I saw it had still a little life, and asked to take it into the house; but father said, No, it was almost dead, anyway, and at the best could live but a short time. But I couldn't bear to see the poor little thing suffer, so I teased until I got it into the house. Then I worked upon mother's sympathies. At first the little creature could not swallow, and the catnip tea mother made it could not take for a long time.



'I got the lamb warm by wrapping it in an old garment and holding it in my arms beside the fireplace. All day long I nursed the lamb, and at night it could swallow just a little. Oh, how pleased I was! But even then I wasn't sure it would live; so I sat up all night with it, fearing it wouldn't be warm enough if there was not some one at hand to look out for its comfort. In the morning, much to my girlish delight, it could stand; and from that time it improved rapidly. It soon learned to drink milk; and from the time it would walk about, it would follow me anywhere if I only called it.



‘My little pet was a fast grower, as symmetrical a sheep as ever walked, and its fleece was of the finest and whitest. Why, I used to take as much care of my lamb as a mother would of a child. I washed it regularly, kept the burdocks picked out of its fleece, and combed and trimmed with bright-colored ribbons the wool on its forehead. When that was being done, the lamb would hold down its head, shut its eyes, and stand as quiet as could be.

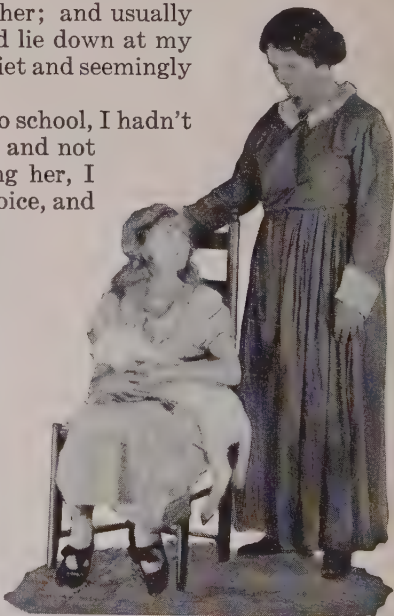
‘From the time it could walk until the season came for the sheep to go to pasture my lamb stayed in the woodshed. It did not take kindly to its own species; and when it was in the field, it preferred being with the cows and horses instead of with other sheep.

‘The lamb was a ewe and became the mother of three lambs, a single one and twins, and her devotion to her little family was as strong as could be.

‘We roamed the fields together and were, in fact, companions and fast friends. I did not have many playmates outside the dumb creatures on the place. There were not many little girls to play with, and I had few dolls; but I used to dress up my lamb in pantalets, and had no end of pleasure in her company. Then I had a little blanket or shawl for her; and usually when that was on, she would lie down at my feet, remaining perfectly quiet and seemingly quite contented.

‘The day the lamb went to school, I hadn’t seen her before starting off; and not wanting to go without seeing her, I called. She recognized my voice, and soon I heard a faint bleating far down the field. More and more distinctly I heard it, and I knew my pet was coming to greet me. My brother Nat said, “Let’s take the lamb to school with us.”

‘Childlike, I thought that would be a good idea, and quickly consented. The lamb followed along close behind me. There was a high stone wall to climb, and it was rather hard work





## Mary's Little Lamb.

Mary had a little lamb,  
 Its fleece was white as snow,  
 And every-where that Mary went,  
 The lamb was sure to go.  
 It followed her to school one day—  
 That was against the rule;  
 It made the children laugh & play,  
 To see a lamb at school.  
 So the teacher turned it out,  
 But still it lingered near,  
 And waited patiently about,  
 Till Mary did appear.

Mary E. Tyler,  
 Somerville Nov. 12. 1883.

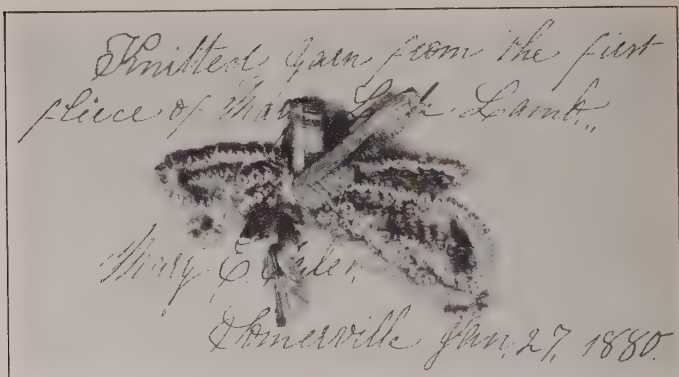
The facsimile of an autograph copy of the poem made by Mary  
 at the age of 77.

to get her over. We got her on top, then clambered over to take her down. She seemed to understand what was expected, and waited quietly for us to take her off the wall.

When the schoolhouse was reached, the teacher had not arrived, and but few of the scholars were there. Then I began to think what I should do with the lamb while school was in session. I took her down to my seat—you know we had old-fashioned, high, boarded-up seats then. Well, I put the lamb under the seat and covered her with her blanket; and she lay down as quietly as could be. By

and by I went forward to recite, leaving the lamb all right; but in a moment there was a clatter, clatter, clatter on the floor, and I knew it was the pattering of the hoofs of my lamb.

'Oh, how mortified I felt! The teacher was Miss Polly Kimball, who was afterward married to a Mr. Loring, and became the mother of Loring, the circulating-library man of Boston. She laughed outright, and of course all the children giggled. It was rare sport for them, but I could see nothing amusing in the situation. I was too ashamed to laugh, or even smile, at the unlooked-for appearance of



Photograph of the card with attached piece of knitting yarn, made from the lamb's wool, and sold for the benefit of the Old South Church, Boston.

my pet. I took her outdoors, and shut her in a shed until I was ready to go home at noon. Usually I did not go home till evening, as we carried our lunch with us; but I went home at noon that day.

'Visiting the school that morning was a young man by the name of John Roulstone, a nephew of the Reverend Lemuel Capen, who was then settled in Sterling. It was the custom then for students to prepare for college with ministers, and for this purpose Mr. Roulstone was studying with his uncle. The young man was very much pleased with the incident of the lamb; and the next day he rode across the fields on horseback to the little old schoolhouse, and handed me a slip of paper which had written upon it the three original stanzas of the poem. Since then three additional stanzas have been added to it. Here is the little





*The Old South Meeting House, to help preserve which Mary gave up  
her treasured stockings made of the lamb's wool.*



Mary's mother, who was Elizabeth Houghton when she married Thomas Sawyer in 1789.

poem as I received it:

Mary had a little lamb;  
Its fleece was white as snow;  
And everywhere that Mary went,  
The lamb was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day,  
Which was against the rule;  
It made the children laugh and play  
To see a lamb at school.

And so the teacher turned it out;  
But still it lingered near,  
And waited patiently about  
Till Mary did appear.

'From the fleece sheared from my  
lamb, mother knit two pairs of very  
nice stockings, which for years I kept  
in memory of my pet. But when the  
ladies were raising money for the

preservation of the Old South Church in Boston, I was  
asked to contribute one pair of these stockings for the  
benefit of the fund. This I did. The stockings were  
raveled out, pieces of the yarn being fastened to cards  
bearing my autograph, and these cards were sold, the whole  
realizing, I am told, about one hundred dollars. After the  
first pair were thus sold, the ladies wanted more yarn;  
and they were so anxious to have the other pair raveled out  
that I gave them also. Now all I have left in remembrance  
of my little pet of years long ago are two cards upon which  
are pasted scraps of the yarn from which the stockings were  
knit.



'I have not told you about the death of my little play-  
mate. It occurred on a Thanksgiving morning. We were  
all out in the barn, where the lamb had followed me.  
It ran right in front of the cows fastened to the stanchions,  
built along the feed box. One of the creatures gave its  
head a toss, then lowered its horns and gored my lamb,  
which gave an agonizing bleat and came toward me with  
the blood streaming from its side. I took it in my arms,  
placed its head in my lap, and there it bled to death. Dur-  
ing its dying moments it would turn its little head and look  
up into my face in a most appealing manner, as if it would  
ask if there was not something that I could do for it. It  
was a sorrowful moment for me when the companion of



many romps, my playfellow of many a long summer's day, gave up its life; and its place could not be filled in my childish heart.'

The little book goes on to say that Mrs. Tyler's later years were cheered by the companionship and loving care of her niece, Annie E. Sawyer, a Somerville school-teacher, who did all in her power to make her aged aunt's declining days peaceful and happy. Mrs. Tyler died December 11, 1889, and is buried in the famous Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston.



The narrative is then confirmed by this affidavit:

'Commonwealth of  
Massachusetts, } ss  
County of Worcester,

'Henry S. Sawyer, of Sterling, Worcester County, Mass., being duly sworn, deposes and says: That he is a relative of Mary E. Tyler, nee Sawyer, deceased; that he lives in the same house in which she was born and married, and in which she lived at the time the incidents referred to in the poem of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" occurred. That he attended school at the same school-house where she attended school at the time referred to in the poem, and that he knows the facts as published in this book to be true.

HENRY S. SAWYER.

'Sworn and subscribed before me, a Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, this sixth day of May, A. D., one thousand nine hundred and one.

William A. Wilcox.  
*Notary Public.'*



*Mary's birthplace and childhood home at Sterling.*

My Dear Miss Stout,

Yours of Feb.

- 3 is received in reply. The lamb lived to be the mother of three little lambs, then it was gored to death by a cow when it was nearly four years old, it is in the neighborhood of seventy - years since it died. I was nine years old the week the lamb was born & I am in my eighty-third year, shall be eighty-three in March next, - please give my love to Mary, I hope she will visit us her next vacation.



29 Central St. Very kindly  
Somerville Mass.

Feb. 5 - 1889. -

Mary E. Tyler

Facsimile of letter in which Mary gives details of the lamb's life.

This is the artless and circumstantial story, published everywhere, and told by Mary Sawyer personally to many friends and at occasional small gatherings. Her relation to the poem seems to have been a matter of modesty with her for a long time, and its widest burst of publicity seems to have occurred about the time that sewing bees and bazaars and fairs were being held by patriotic Boston to save the Old South Church from being sold. Mrs. Ann Eliza (Sawyer) Warren, a niece of Mary's, tells in the *National Magazine* for June, 1897, how this came about:

'Being in Boston at the time of the Old South Fair,

some of the leaders asked her, "What shall we do to amuse and interest the children who may come here?" At their earnest request she consented to go every day at a certain hour, and in a side room of the building, tell the story of the lamb to the children and give to each of them a little silken knot of yarn from the fleece of the lamb. By this means she added to the funds of the fair many hundreds of dollars and indeed this work did not stop with the close of the fair, but for months, every now and then, letters would come from far and near, asking for a piece of the yarn.'

The distance to which these fleecy souvenirs found their way is indicated by the widely separated points from which they have been offered to the Ford collection.

If one were asked the reason for belief in the story as here told, the first answer would be, *Mary Sawyer said so*. She told a story that is natural and unforced and that has

preserved its consistency from the time it was first heard until now. It is a plain tale and every feature of it is a common possibility. Mary was not the only girl who had a lamb for a pet, and Mary's lamb was not the only one that was saved from untimely death by kindly nursing. Yet Mary told the story within a comparatively short distance of the scene of the poem, and at the very scene itself, which would hardly be the case had there been any doubt about it. The town of Sterling and all the neighbors thereof could have risen against her in denial, if the story were unknown or merely a myth. Mrs. Tyler lived a most highly respected lady and died at the age of

eighty-three in December, 1889. No one who knew her character could doubt her truthfulness, no one who knew her mind could doubt her alertness of memory, and both these qualities have weight in considering the story of Mary and the lamb.

How uncompromising is her testimony can be understood only by a study of the great number of times she repeated it. On every little card that bore a snip of yarn,



*Nathaniel Sawyer—Mary's brother Nat—who helped lift the lamb over the stone fence on the way to school.*



*W. J.*

she wrote with her own hand, 'Knitted yarn from the first fleece of Mary's Little Lamb,' followed by her signature, 'Mary E. Sawyer,' and the date, as on page 8. These souvenirs had a very extensive range, considering their comparative scarcity, among those who were likely to know or to challenge the facts, and yet there is overwhelming testimony that these bits of yarn and Mary's name were received for what they purported to be. Moreover, there is in existence this autograph letter, signed, which is reproduced in facsimile on page 12 in this volume:



'My Dear Miss Stout,

'Yours of feby. 3 is received in reply. The lamb lived to be the mother of three little lambs, then it was gored to death by a cow when it was nearly four years old, it is in the neighborhood of seventy years since it died. I was nine years old the week the lamb was born & I am in my eighty-third year, shall be eighty-three in March next, —please give my love to Mary, I hope she will visit us her next vacation.

Very kindly,  
Mary E. Tyler.

29 Central St.  
Somerville, Mass.  
Feby. 5—1889.'

This recollection of Mary as to her age at the time of the lamb incident is borne out by an article published in the *Boston Transcript* of February 14, 1878, which reads as follows:

'The veritable "Mary (who) had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow" visited the Old South Spinning Bee yesterday afternoon and told the ladies present the story of the lamb. When she was nine years old and was living on a farm, one morning she went out into the barn where she found two little lambs, one of them nearly dead . . .'

She also wrote in her own hand the poem as she says it was given to her by John Roulstone, and she always wrote it in the same way, never more than twelve lines. Some facsimile presentations of these autographs are to be found as previously noted, and an autograph copy of the poem on page 7. All these together say, 'This is the fleece of the lamb; this is the poem; and I am Mary.' There can be no doubt about the unequivocal nature of the claim she made for the lamb and John Roulstone's poem. And Boston apparently accepted it.

The story, however, was current long before the Old South publicity, if certain testimony is to be credited. Naturally, if Mary's lamb had inspired a poem by being put out of school, the matter could not have been kept secret. It was at least told through the extensive family.

Mrs. Mary (Sawyer) Powell, New York City, a niece



'So the teacher turned it out.'  
Polly Kimball—Mary's teacher  
who appears in the poem.





of Mary Sawyer and a daughter of Nat (Nat was the little brother who helped Mary's lamb over the stone wall on its way to school), writes in 1910:

'The story that father told me is the same as is printed in book form by Fred A. Stokes Company, New York.'

This statement includes Mary's brother as one of the original narrators of the incident. Then there are such references as these found in the letters of Eliza Ann (Sawyer) Warren, of West Newbury, Massachusetts.

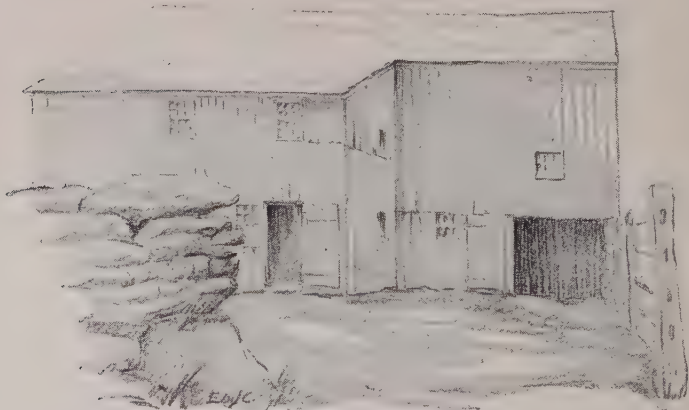
'My youngest brother who died last October (1910) says: "I have a letter written to me by Uncle Nathaniel not long before he died. In it he mentions Reverend Capen and the verses about Aunt Mary's lamb . . ."

'Brother Frank writes, "I only know of it by Aunt Mary, Uncle Nat and Grandma Sawyer telling me of it, and Uncle Nat was the one who showed me where the lamb was found. Uncle Nat was always chaffing Aunt Mary about it . . . ."

'Aunt Mary used to say that Mrs. Hale never claimed the first three verses, but that she added to them; it was her relatives that claimed the whole . . . .

'I do not know what year the incident happened. Aunt Mary was born in 1806. I always supposed her a girl of eight or ten years when it happened . . . .

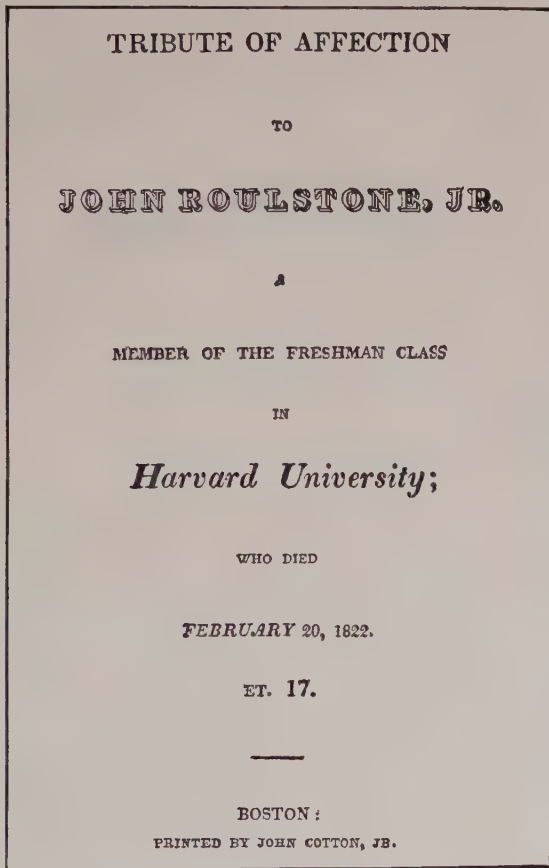
'For myself I have known the fact of Aunt Mary and



The barn at Sterling where the lamb was found, in which it died four years later. This building still stands.

her lamb from childhood . . . I have an impression when we had a family gathering at bro Edwards' in 1863 or 4, Uncle Nat and Aunt Mary had some fun over it.'

Then there is the niece who lived with Mary Tyler



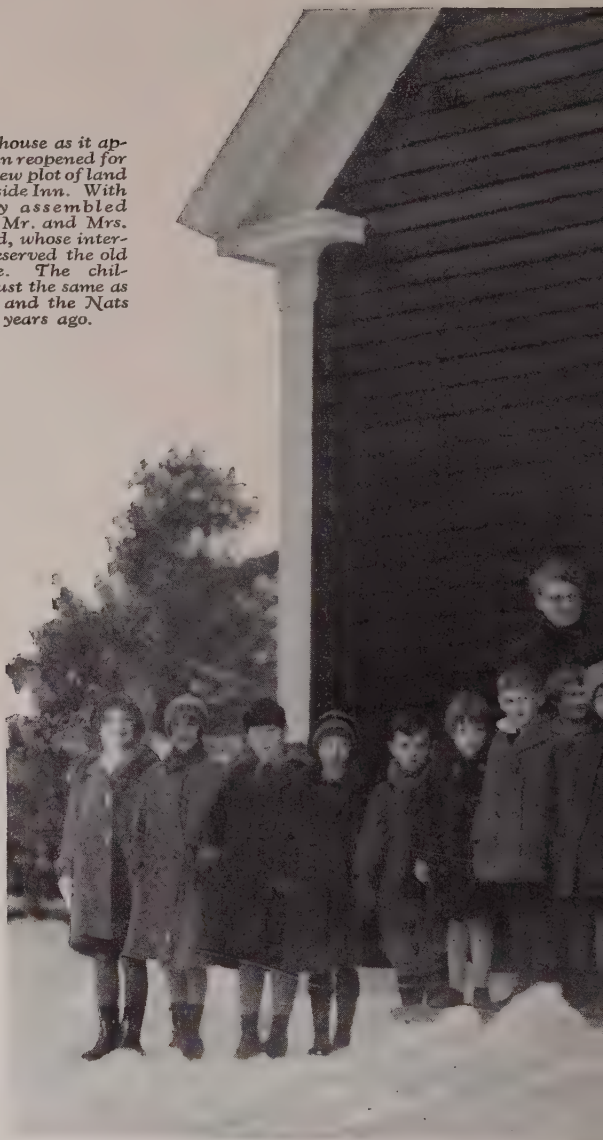
*Title-page of a tribute to John Roulstone, Jr., author of the first twelve lines of 'Mary had a little lamb.'*

throughout her closing years in her Somerville home and who has this to say in June, 1926:

'In regard to Mr. Roulstone being the author of the little poem of Mary and the Lamb, my aunt always declared that all she knew about it was the fact that he drove, or rather



*The schoolhouse as it appeared when reopened for use on its new plot of land at the Wayside Inn. With the newly assembled pupils are Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ford, whose interest has preserved the old schoolhouse. The children are just the same as the Marys and the Nats of 100 years ago.*





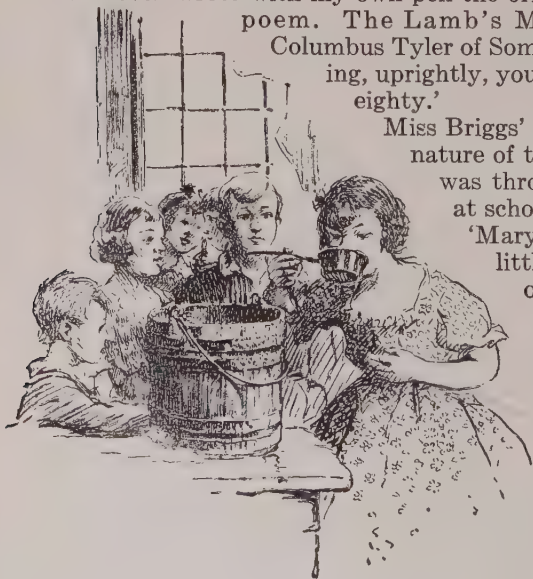
rode, to the school on horseback the morning after the incident and handed her a slip of paper on which were written the first twelve lines . . . The teacher's name was Polly Kimball. It was just a simple childish story that pleased children, for my aunt always told them she fed it the first few days of its life on catnip tea. She was greatly annoyed by the prominence given both it and herself when it was first printed at the time of the Old South Fair and regretted exceedingly that she had been persuaded to tell it in public.'

Among the many who heard the story of Mary and her little lamb as told by Mary herself, and who afterward wrote it for a magazine, was Mary Balch Briggs, formerly of Dedham, Massachusetts, who from 1898 until her death in 1912 was a teacher at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Hampton, Virginia. Miss Briggs edited a little paper called *Work at Home* and in it told of visiting with Mary and hearing the story of the lamb.

' . . . I had seen with my own eyes an equally remarkable personage, no less than Mary who had a little lamb. She was no empty dream. She ate dinner with an appetite that belongs to a veritable body; she shook hands heartily; she sat by my fireside; she told the story of her lamb; she even wrote with my own pen the original verses of the poem. The Lamb's Mary is now Mrs. Columbus Tyler of Somerville, a fine looking, uprightly, young-hearted lady of eighty.'

Miss Briggs' story clears up the nature of the wrapping which was thrown over the lamb at school:

'Mary threw over it a little striped blanket of her mother's weaving which she wore to school instead of a shawl.' Another figure who appears in the story is John





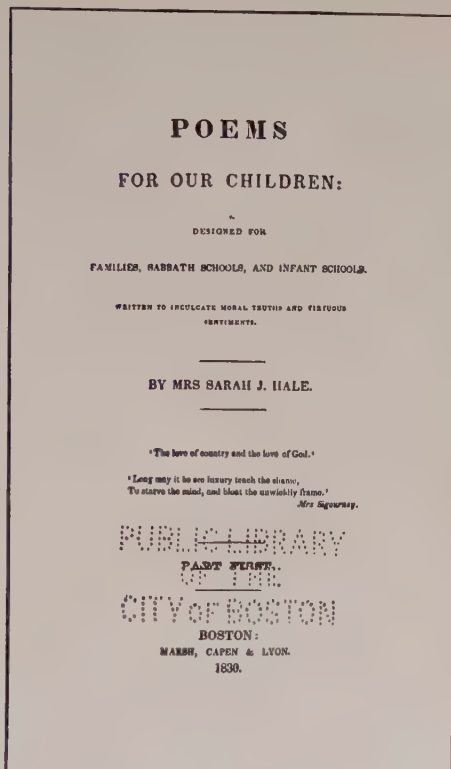
Roulstone, whom Mary always said was the first to hand her the poem, or rather the first twelve lines which dealt only with the school incident. We know as much of John Roulstone's life from boyhood to death as we do of Mary's life, though John died in 1822 at the age of seventeen.

Can it be shown that John Roulstone had any part in the making of the poem? We should never have known of John in this connection had not Mary always included him in her narrative. If her story had been a piece of fiction she could as well have named anyone else, the teacher for ex-



ample, or some of her own relatives. However, in the Mary Sawyer accounts of the incident there is no room for any name save that of John Roulstone as the first author of the poem.

Who was he? Mary says he was a young man fitting for college under the tutelage of his uncle, the Reverend Lemuel Capen, the minister at Sterling. These are facts. Mr. Capen was the minister of Sterling from 1815 to 1819; the pamphlets containing the sermon given at his ordination in 1815 and his own farewell address of 1819 are in evidence. There is also a sixteen-page tract entitled, 'Tribute of Affection to JOHN ROULSTONE, JR., a Member of the Freshman Class in Harvard University;



*Title page of book in which the 24-line poem was first printed.*

who died February 20, 1822, Age 17, Boston; printed by John Cotton, Jr.' (See page 17.)

This tribute was written by the Reverend Lemuel Capon, who says in the preface that he knew John from his early youth, and during the last five years of his life had almost the sole direction and oversight of his conduct and was 'constantly in a situation to discover all that could be known by human inspection.'

The youth was well born, his father being Captain John Roulstone, member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston. The captain's portrait hangs on the walls of Faneuil Hall and his grave is in the Granary Burying Grounds. Sent to Sterling to be fitted for college, young John lived with his uncle, the parish minister. As John

was born in 1805, he was thus a year older than Mary. On the basis of Mary's statement that she was nine years old when the lamb was born, it remains to be discovered how old she was at the time the lamb followed her to school. Unfortunately there is no data on this point, except that the lamb lived nearly four years from March, 1815. It was therefore at some point between March, 1815, and 1819 that the incident of the poem occurred, and Mary was between nine and thirteen years of age, while John was between ten and fourteen.

It may be noted

## POEMS

### FOR OUR CHILDREN:

INCLUDING "MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB,"

DESIGNED FOR

FAMILIES, SABBATH SCHOOLS, AND INFANT SCHOOLS.

WRITTEN TO INCULCATE MORAL TRUTHS AND VIRTUOUS  
SENTIMENTS.

BY MRS SARAH J. HALE.

'The love of country and the love of God.'

'Long may it be ere luxury teach the shame,  
To starve the mind, and bloat the unwieldy frame.'  
*Mrs Sigourney.*

#### PART FIRST.

MARSH, CAPEN & LYON.  
1830.

Reprinted with a preface  
giving an account of

"MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB."  
1916.

R. W. HALE, 16 CENTRAL ST.  
BOSTON.

here that in Francis H. Sawyer's copy of the book containing Mary's story, on page 39, he has written 'in 1817' as the date of the lamb episode. It fits all the computations. This would make John twelve years old, and Mary eleven.

There is then no manner of doubt that there was a John Roulstone, and that he lived in Sterling.

What were his abilities or characteristics by which we may judge of his possible authorship of a children's poem? Reverend Lemuel Capen, in his memorial 'Tribute,' wrote:

'Children were special objects of his attention. He was equally their protector and guide. Instead of taking pains to irritate and vex them, as many young persons are apt to do, he delighted in making them happy; and devoted much of his leisure to their amusement and instruction. It was peculiarly interesting and sufficiently proved the goodness of his heart, as it showed the confidence they reposed in him, to see a family of little ones running to greet him, when he approached, and clinging round him with a kind of filial fondness. He was distinguished for a scrupulous regard for truth.'

Mr. Capen goes on to describe the boy's 'assiduous attention to his studies, and his diligence in the improvement of his time . . . it is rather probable, that during the last year of his life, his close application to his books in some degree prepared the way for his fatal disorder, or at least served to accelerate its progress.'

Thus far we have the portrait of a lad who loved children and was devoted to his studies. To those who know the period, the latter fact will bring no doubt. It was a time when ambitious boys were brought up on literature and looked forward to scholastic preëminence. That has largely passed out of American life, but in the days of John Roulstone the principal outlet for intellectual eagerness was in the declamation of sonorous lines or the imitation of the poets. Perhaps no other period in our country saw more amateur poetry than the first fifty years of the 19th Century.

Did John Roulstone write? The nearest approach that can be made to an answer is again in the 'Tribute':



Miss Martha E. Hopkins, present teacher of the old school.





---

Stirling Bap.  
Sept. 8. 1879

Dear Madam.

Your card of the 3<sup>rd</sup> inst came to me at this my native place having been forwarded from Somerville my residence. John Roulstone of Boston was fitting for college in this town & happening to be present at the exercises on the day the "Little Lamb" followed me to school ~~was~~ was an eye witness of the scene.

---



In a few days thereafter he handed me the Poem consisting of twelve lines written in "Blank Verse" portraying the event, being the first three stanzas of the Poem as now printed. Mr. Roulstone died while a freshman in Harvard University. I am ignorant how the Poem got into print;

Very respectfully

Mary E. Tyler.

---

Note the expression 'blank verse.' Mary probably means, not divided into the three conventional four-line stanzas.



‘Though not essential to the principal design of this narrative, still it may not be uninteresting to say something of the literary character of its subject, especially as he was no less distinguished in this than in other respects. The qualities of his mind, as well as those of his heart, were of a very high order. Accuracy and discrimination were prominent traits, which would have qualified him for close investigation and research; but his taste and inclination would probably have led him to cultivate classical learning, rather than the abstruse sciences. He possessed a lively fancy and a correct judgment. His moral purity seemed to have diffused itself over his whole character, and extended even to the formation of his literary taste. In elocution he greatly excelled. He not only acquired ascendancy over his own passions, but appears to have studied with much care and success those of mankind in general; and could describe them with a voice, an expression and a manner, which at once commanded admiration and encouraged hope.’

The reader now possesses the material from which to form an opinion whether these traits of character and these intellectual attainments were such as to lead, in a verse-making age, to the writing of the first twelve lines of ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb’ by John Roulstone at, say, the age of



Call Address "Edison, New York"

From the Laboratory  
of  
Thomas A. Edison,  
Orange, N.J.  
Feb 15 1927

Dear Mr Ford

The first phonograph in the world  
was made under my direction by one of the workmen  
at my Laboratory at Menlo Park New Jersey in the  
early fall of 1877

I was the first person who spoke  
into the phonograph—and I recited the well  
known verse.

" Mary had a little lamb.  
Its fleece was white as snow  
And everywhere that Mary went  
The lamb was sure to go "

These were the first words ever recorded  
and reproduced in the phonograph

Yours sincerely

Thos A Edison

To Henry Ford  
Dearborn Michigan

This poem came spontaneously to Mr. Edison's mind on a certain  
historic occasion fifty years before this letter was written.

twelve. One reader has suggested that the diction of the Reverend Lemuel Capen led him to wonder if the boy had not benefited somewhat by the clergyman's own ability to versify. Mary's niece, who is still living, says she had never heard even the faintest suggestion that possibly Mr. Capen had helped in the making of the poem. A daughter-in-law of the Reverend Lemuel Capen, who is now resident at Dedham, Massachusetts, expresses surprise that there is any question over John Roulstone's authorship of the poem; it has always been accepted in the Capen family, she says, that the verses originated as has been told here. In a letter under date of September 8, 1879, written to Kate Grant Bliss, Stafford Springs, Connecticut, Mrs. Tyler said:

Sterling, Mass., Sept. 8, 1879.

Dear Madam:

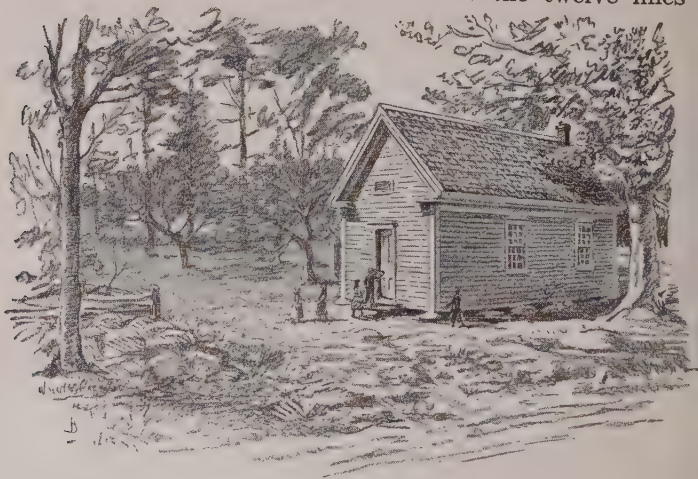
Your card of the 3d inst. came to me at this my native place having been forwarded from Somerville my residence. John Roulstone of Boston was fitting for College in this town & happening to be present at the exercises on the day the "Little Lamb" followed me to school was an eyewitness of the scene.

In a few days thereafter he handed me the poem consisting of twelve lines written in 'Blank Verse' portraying the event, being the first three stanzas of the Poem as now printed. Mr. Rouldstone (sic) died while a Freshman in Harvard University. I am ignorant how the Poem got into print.

Very Respectfully, Mary E. Tyler

(For the autograph of this letter see pages 24 and 25.)

What Mrs. Tyler means by 'Blank Verse' can only be conjectured. Probably she means that the twelve lines



were not broken into stanzas. This is suggested by her reference to 'the poem as now printed.'

Notwithstanding the concise completeness of these recollections, candor requires the statement that one element is lacking to render the verdict unanimous, and that is the counterclaim of authorship which is made on behalf of Sarah Josepha Hale, a distinguished writer of the period and author of numerous poems for children. Mrs. Hale was a remarkable woman in many respects and in her time was easily the best-known woman in the United States. She was editor of the famous *Godey's Lady's Book*, then at the height of its fame and influence. She is credited with being the person who, more than any other, induced the Government to establish Thanksgiving Day as a national institution. It was due to her forceful activity that the Bunker Hill Monument Fund was successfully completed. She organized the Seaman's Aid Society, which exists to this day. Altogether, she was a woman of extraordinary ability and usefulness. And for many years she was regarded as the author of 'Mary Had a Little Lamb.' Even today the claim is made by surviving descendants of Mrs. Hale and is supported by testimony which is entitled to consideration.



What are the elements of this testimony? First, a volume printed at Boston in the year 1830, a copy of which may be consulted in the Boston Public Library (see p. 19). Its title-page is as follows:

## POEMS

FOR OUR CHILDREN:

Designed for

FAMILIES, SABBATH SCHOOLS, AND  
INFANT SCHOOLS

Written to inculcate moral truths  
and virtuous sentiments

By

MRS. SARAH J. HALE

*'The love of country and the love of God.'*

*'Long may it be ere luxury teach the shame,  
To starve the mind, and bloat the unwieldy  
frame.'* Mrs. Sigourney.

PART FIRST

BOSTON:  
March, Capen & Lyon  
1830



Richard Kimball Powers, last  
survivor of Mary's schoolmates.  
He died at the age of 104.





The teacher scolding Mary.

This book contains the poem in question. As printed in Mrs. Hale's volume, the poem is a twenty-four-line composition, comprising three stanzas of eight lines each. The first twelve lines relate the incident. The last twelve lines contain all the moral reflections. This sharp division in the ideas of the poem is not marked by any stanza division, since the end of the first twelve lines and the beginning of the next twelve lines occur in the middle of the second stanza. Readers who have been familiar with the poem from childhood will be in a position to verify the observation that it is the *first twelve lines* that are most spontaneously quoted; it is the *first twelve lines* that come most naturally to the memory; and the reason is quite clear—it is the *first twelve lines* that give a natural account of a simple human occurrence. The rest is more involved, artificial and moralistic. Perhaps it might be well to add—more adult.

The volume of 1830 should not be confused with a reprint put forth in 1916 by a descendant of Mrs. Hale. This reprint purports to be a representation of *Poems for Our Children* 'without change in size, type, binding or cover, with the addition of a brief preface telling its history, 1916.'





## MARY'S LAMB.

Allegro.

Mary had a little lamb, Its fleece was white as snow, And everywhere that

Mary went, The lamb was sure to go; He followed her to school one day—That

was against the rule, It made the children laugh and play, to see a lamb at school.

2  
So the teacher turned him out,  
But still he lingered near,  
And waited patiently about,  
Till Mary did appear;  
And then he ran to her, and laid  
His head upon her arm,  
As if he said—I'm not afraid—  
You'll keep me from all harm.

6

3  
What makes th' lamb love Mary so!  
The eager children cry—  
'O Mary loves the lamb, you know,'  
The teacher did reply;—  
'And you each gentle animal  
In confidence may bind,  
And make them follow at your call,  
If you are always kind.

As the poem appeared in the "Juvenile Lyre" in 1831.



The old schoolroom as it now appears.

It should be noted, however, that the reprinted title-page (see p. 22) carries an additional line—that is, a line not found in the 1830 title-page—which is

‘INCLUDING, “MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB.” ’

Attention is called to this for the reason that had this line appeared in the edition of 1830, it would have had a very weighty bearing on the controversy concerning the authorship of the poem. Such a line could have been legitimately interpreted to mean that Mrs. Hale wrote and claimed the authorship of ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb.’ Such a line on the title-page of the original edition would have indicated that the little poem had already attained a vogue which entitled it to special mention and which gave such special mention the value of an advertisement for the book. It would also have indicated that to the public of that period Mrs. Hale could be readily identified as the author of ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb.’

Now, the utmost search fails to reveal that Mrs. Hale ever specially mentioned this poem. There is nothing found to indicate that she regarded it of unusual importance, as indeed in her scale of work it was not. When the poem was republished to music in *The Juvenile Lyre* of 1831



(see p. 31) no authorship was given. When, encouraged by the reception accorded *Poems for Our Children*, Mrs. Hale ventured with another book of verse in 1834, she mentioned in the preface of the latter volume some of the more popular poems of the former volume, but the poem about Mary and her lamb was not among those mentioned. The preface of the 1834 volume is interesting:



'Some time ago I wrote a little book, naming it *Poems for Our Children*. A number of these poems have been set to music by Mr. Mason; and if you have never seen the book, you have probably heard or sung

'If ever I see  
On bush or tree'

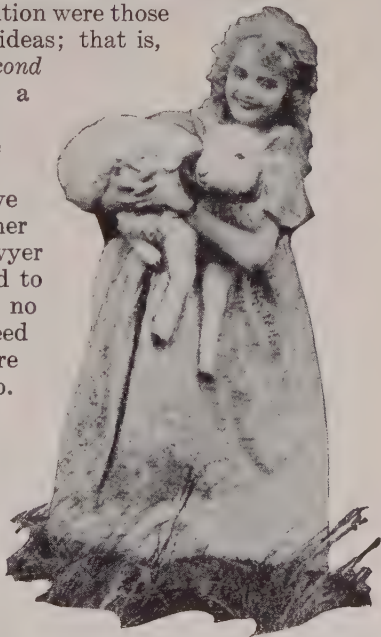
or,

'Our Father in Heaven  
We hallow Thy name.'

'I was told that these songs were very popular with the young, and this encouraged me to write this book for your gratification. I have included in this book all the favorites from the other, and added others which I hope will become favorites.'

'Mary's Lamb' was one of the poems reprinted—but without mention by Mrs. Hale. The poems which she regarded as most worthy of mention were those that abounded in moralistic ideas; that is, ideas similar to those of the *second twelve lines* of 'Mary Had a Little Lamb.'

In later years when the poem was spoken of by Mrs. Hale—and that appears to have been at a time subsequent to her learning of the Mary Sawyer claim—Mrs. Hale is reported to have said that the poem had no basis in fact; that it was indeed pure fancy: in brief, that there was no Mary and no lamb. But as to this we have no direct testimony from Mrs. Hale herself. No letters have been produced as from her hand. The volume of 1830 and the statements of her descendants as to their recollections of her



poem constitute the available material now at hand.

The case, then, stands this way: Mary Sawyer said that John Roulstone gave her the poem which consists of the first twelve lines of the poem as now known. This was about the year 1817. The second twelve lines, Mary Sawyer always said, were added to the poem by another and a later author. On the other hand, the proponents of the theory that Mrs. Hale was the author claim that Mrs. Hale wrote the entire poem as it now stands, that its presence in *Poems for Our Children*, 1830, proves it, and that to question this is to cast aspersion on Mrs. Hale's truthfulness.

It is not believed by the present writer that the question of veracity enters at all. Mary Sawyer was a truthful woman, and Sarah Josepha Hale was a truthful woman. The problem has to be resolved on quite other lines than assigning all veracity in the case to one party and all error of statement to the other. The true solution is undoubtedly to be found in a division of the honor of authorship. And the structure of the poem itself, even if we did not have Mary Sawyer's unequivocal statement, would go far toward establishing this point of view.

Mary Sawyer said that *her* poem, that is, the poem written for her by John Roulstone, was inspired by and founded upon an actual schoolroom incident, and that it consisted of twelve lines only and dealt with the incident only. Mrs. Hale is reported to have said that *her* poem was the product of imagination.

It is significant that the Hale version of the poem consists of incident and an added imaginative conversation, while the Roulstone version consists of incident alone, and that the 'seam' between the two appears precisely at the point where Mary Sawyer said the Roulstone version ended.

An inquiry made of the poem itself—putting the poem itself on the witness stand—discloses this double nature of the composition, dividing the first from the second half of the number of lines. The 'seam' is very clearly seen.

Take the elements of the first twelve lines, and look at them. How simple they are! Each line is a complete statement in itself. The lines flow naturally. They deal with persons, things, happenings. Analyze the poem in the first twelve lines, and this is what it is:

Mary had a lamb.  
Its fleece was white as snow.  
It followed her to school one day.  
That was against the rule.  
It made the children laugh and play.  
And so the teacher turned it out.  
But still it lingered near.



The qualities here disclosed are simplicity of narrative and naturalness of incident. The statement of the poem could not be made more simple, as you will see if you try it. It is the inimitable simplicity of the child mind.

And then (very important to the critical weighing of our problem) consider the naturalness of incident. The lamb behaves just as a lamb would behave that was brought up as Mary's lamb was brought up. The school children behave in exactly the manner that has marked school be-



havior whenever a comical foreign element has been injected into the even order of class routine. The teacher behaves precisely as any school-teacher would behave in the circumstances. The lamb follows its instincts; the pupils theirs; the teacher hers. There is not an artificial or 'fetched' note in all the eight elements which comprise the twelve lines.

But with the thirteenth line, which comes in the midst of the second stanza of the Hale version, a subtle difference





appears. Immediately the simple arrangement of a *line to an idea* is changed. Immediately artless naturalness gives way to artificial and moralistic imaginativeness, with unnatural incidents invented to support the moral. The twelfth line completes the incident, and leaves the lamb outside the schoolhouse door, waiting lingeringly about for Mary to appear.

And, then, begins a fabric which is different from all that precedes it. First, it is different in style. A line no longer equals an idea. This change begins immediately with the thirteenth line:

And then he ran to her, and laid . . .

Nothing so sophisticated in construction appears in the first twelve lines. It is, however, not uncommon in Mrs.



Mary's home in Somerville, Massachusetts, until her death. Mary is the figure standing on the porch. Her husband stands on the walk below.

Hale's verse, but it is entirely absent from the Roulstone version of the poem. This sophistication of style appears several times:

And you each gentle animal  
In confidence may bind,

—compare that with any two lines in the first twelve lines, and the difference becomes at once apparent.

But there is a deeper change than of literary style; the plane and texture of the thought changes. Sophistication of style is accompanied by sophistication of thought.

If 'style is the man,' it includes also the age of the man: the latter twelve lines of our poem are the product of an older mind than produced the first twelve lines.

Whereas in the first twelve lines not an unlikely nor unnatural note is sounded, the rest of the poem is highly unlikely and unnatural. First, the lamb is almost made to talk:

And then he ran to her, and laid  
His head upon her arm,  
As if he said—'I'm not afraid—  
You'll keep me from all harm.'

A second unnatural thing appears: the children in school break into loud philosophical inquiry:

'What makes the lamb love Mary so!'  
The eager children cry.

And a third unnatural occurrence tops it all. In the first twelve lines, with unadorned and self-certifying naturalness, the teacher is represented as turning out-of-doors the lamb whose unexpected appearance had destroyed the decorum of her class. But in this latter half of the poem we have a different kind of teacher, turning the incident into a 'moral' upon the demand of the children!

'O Mary loves the lamb, you know,'  
The teacher did reply.

But that is not enough. The 'moral must out'—

And you each gentle animal  
In confidence may bind,  
And make them follow at your call,  
If you are always kind.

That is not the way John Roulstone would write. That is not the way he did write. He would write what he knew occurred; he would not invent an occurrence. His purpose was not to point a moral but to versify an incident. Where the incident stopped, he stopped, the poem stopped; it was complete. The dialog between teacher and pupils was not included in the Roulstone version because it did not occur. But it was necessary to have something like that occur if a moral was to be tacked to the lines, and the author of the second twelve lines—evidently a different and heavier hand—was interested in the moral. The incident had been previously supplied; the moral is obviously a later appendage.

There is surely some significance in the fact that the



public, whose instinct in such matters is to be considered, never gets beyond the twelfth line in any spontaneous recital of the poem. The reason is there for all to see: beyond the twelfth line the poem passes from the objective to the subjective, from the natural to the artificial, from lyric simplicity to homiletic sophistication. In short, the twelfth line is the division between childish naturalness and adult inventiveness.

And there is another variation—a minor one, to be sure—but worthy to be noticed: it concerns the sex of the lamb. Mary's lamb was 'it,' as undoubtedly a lamb would be to boys and girls of the age of John Roulstone and Mary Sawyer. In her later years, Mary told that the lamb was a ewe. But to a boy of twelve and a girl of eleven, the lamb was 'it.' In Mrs. Hale's version, however, the lamb goes through all the verses as a male: 'he, him, his.' In the second line of Mrs. Hale's version—'Its fleece was white as snow'—is the only note of neuter gender; all the other notes are masculine. In Mary Sawyer's poem this inconsistency does not appear.

Now, to visualize all this, let us piece the Roulstone version, as Mary Sawyer writes it, to the second twelve lines of the Hale version and see how they fit:

Mary had a little lamb,  
Its fleece was white as snow;  
And everywhere that Mary went,  
The lamb was sure to go.  
It followed her to school one day,  
That was against the rule;  
It made the children laugh and play  
To see a lamb at school.  
So the teacher turned it out,  
But still it lingered near,  
And waited patiently about  
Till Mary did appear.  
*And then he ran to her and laid  
His head upon her arm,  
As if he said—'I'm not afraid—  
You'll keep me from all harm.'*



*'What makes the lamb love Mary so?'*  
*The eager children cry—*  
*'O Mary loves the lamb, you know,'*  
*The teacher did reply;—*  
*'And you each gentle animal*  
*In confidence may bind,*  
*And make them follow at your call,*  
*If you are always kind.'*

If there is no doubt that the incident could have oc-

curred, there is no doubt that the Roulstone version of the poem describes it just as it would have occurred. It does not describe the teacher's colloquy with the class, because that would be most unlikely to occur in the circumstances.

It is conceded at once that the last twelve lines of the poem are not John Roulstone's or anyone else's that we know, except Mrs. Hale's. It should be conceded also that the first twelve lines are not Mrs. Hale's or anyone else's that we know, except John Roulstone's. In the face of the two contentions, certainly the weight of every kind of testimony is on the side of the Sterling origin of the first twelve lines.

Consider the course such verses would take. They were first a 'josh,' as we should say today. Mary had smuggled her lamb into school and had been found out; the joke was on Mary. The lines got themselves recited around the neighborhood to her intense annoyance. From farm to farm, from party to party, the poem would run—people repeated all sorts of verse in those days much more frequently than we do now—until it became a common by-word. No one knew where it came from; no one cared. Not everyone knew who Mary was—there were plenty of Marys in New England. Just as we recite today,

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are.

But who wrote it? Do we know? Did the person who first wrote it originate it? Did the person who first wrote Mother Goose rhymes originate them, or simply gather up couplets and rhymed sayings which had been polished smooth by long usage in the common speech? There may have been a little Jack Horner, but who originated the lines about him? Were they just written out of someone's imagination? Probably not—Jack had somewhere set someone a-rhyming on his name.

Now, the point of this is that the Sawyers lived near the north line of Massachusetts and the Hales (or the Buells,



Frances H. Sawyer, 78 years old,  
who has known the story of Mary  
since his childhood.

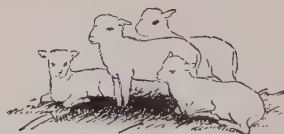


for that was Mrs. Hale's maiden name) lived near the south line of New Hampshire, and that for all purposes they were in the same general community, and both within the range of any cross-country saying that might arise. For, as the popular song circulates among us today, so did smart sayings, good stories and new verses circulate throughout adjacent counties. 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' is one of those sayings which easily fit into the memory and easily flit from the tongue. There is no earthly reason for Miss Buell failing to hear of it, even to recite or sing it herself. Sarah Buell was sixteen years older than Mary Sawyer, and was married the year that John Roulstone died.

Is it illogical, in view of the supporting testimony of the Sterling claim, to say that Sarah Buell, now Sarah Hale, a widow, starting out to make her way in life by means of her pen, should recall the countryside saying about Mary and a lamb, and use it as the basis for a little moral preachment of kindness to animals? It is not illogical—and it neither accuses Mrs. Hale of plagiarism nor Mary Sawyer of untruthfulness. To all intents and purposes the poem which Mrs. Hale had in mind—the poem about kindness to animals—was hers. But it is not the same poem that Mary claimed—the poem that is exclusively about one lamb.

Mary was right when she said there was a lamb and a Mary.

Mrs. Hale was right when she said that, with her, it was only imagination, for that is the only way she could have had it even when hearing the simple verses come cross-country from Middlesex County in Massachusetts to Sullivan County in New Hampshire. It is the only way every reader since has had it. But imagination must have a foundation in reality and Sterling furnished the reality.





## *Acknowledgment*

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Among living persons, no one is better informed on the subject of Mary Sawyer and the Roulstone poem than Francis H. Sawyer, of Clinton, Massachusetts. Mr. Sawyer has freely given of his information for the preparation of this volume.

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Two motion picture films—one colored and one plain—of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” have been made by Fitzpatrick Pictures, Inc., 729 Seventh Ave., New York City. Several “stills” from the film appear on pages 1, 6, 30, 33 and 35 of this volume, by permission of the owners of the film.

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Acknowledgment is made of generous interest on the part of numerous correspondents in all parts of the United States.



















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